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ABSTRACT

Curricular domains relevant to work experience programs are motivation, sequencing, and goals. A case study of a project of institutional collaboration on peer counseling for work experience students (forming a consortium between a city school board of education and a community college) was made through data generated from the Youthwork National Policy Study. The objective of the study was to discover how these curricular concerns were translated into policy implementation. The project called for placement of 400 high school and 400 college students through the project. From the case study it became apparent that attention to motivation, sequencing, and goals in program implementation does not proceed in a straight line. Rather, the bureaucratic and ideological context became increasingly influential in determining the eventual curricular design. As the project evolved, the number of students placed became the major criterion of success, usurping the motivation, sequencing, and goal curricular demands; and logistics problems overshadowed curricular concerns. From this case study several recommendations regarding curriculum of work experience programs were made: (1) work experience programs that are supposed to be educational need to study the link between schooling and the job; (2) work experience projects should take into account the ideology and bureaucratic norms of community groups and schools when beginning a project; (3) curriculum choices should be defined in advance and the role of local officials should be clarified; and (4) goals should go beyond economic productivity to learning about work and personal development. (KC)

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The Curriculum of Work Experience

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While billions of dollars have been spent to subsidize work experience for low-income youth on the grounds that it will be educational, remarkably little attention has been paid to the conditions under which work experience is most likely to be educational. (See Ball, Gerould, and Burstein, 1980; Hamilton & Stewart, 1980; Rist, et al., 1979b; Wiggington, 1975; Wurzburg, 1978, as examples.) One indication of this lack of attention is the nearly total absence of curricular concepts from treatments of work experience programs (Farrar, DeSanctis, and Cowden, 1980; Hamilton, 1980). This case study attempts to bridge that gap by using ethnographic data from one of the 46 exemplary programs examined in the Youthwork National Policy Study (Rist, et al., 1979c). The Youthwork National Policy Study looked at a variety of issues related to the work-education linkage in programs created through the Exemplary In-School Demonstration Projects, created through the Youth Employment and Demonstration Projects Act (YEDPA) of 1977.

Three curricular domains relevant to work experience programs are motivation, sequencing, and goals (Bruner, 1966; Dewey, 1938; Eisner, 1979; Posner and Rudnitsky, 1978; Posner and Strike, 1976; Taba, 1967; and Zais, 1976). Motivation refers to the importance of geering the program to the particular interests and abilities of the students. Program staff make choices about motivation in learner placements, learner followup, and learner worksite changes. Sequencing includes the activities engaged in by a student and their ordering. The goals of a program may

relate to personal development, socialization, economic productivity or further learning (Johnson, 1977; and Eisner, 1979).

This study assumes that program implementation is an evolutionary process (Farrar, DeSanctis, and Cohen, 1980; Hamilton, 1980; Majone and Wildavsky, 1979; and Rist et al., 1981). It also assumes that curricular choices, both procedural and substantive, are made in context as the program becomes implemented in a setting (Schwab, 1969, 1971; Reid, 1978; Walker, 1975; Lundgrun, 1979; and McKinney and Westbury, 1975). Therefore, this case study explores the extent to which the implementation of the "policy idea" of a work experience program is shaped by an ideological and bureaucratic context at three major levels: the school, the community, and the federal government. This case study demonstrates how choices made in the curricular domains of motivation, sequencing and goals responded to these contexts.

The case study is a mode of research that can explore the inner logic of program development focussed on real educational programs (Schwab, 1969; Reid and Walker, 1975; Wilson, 1979). This study is developed from a secondary analysis of the data generated from the analysis packets for the Youthwork National Policy Study. (See the packets at the end of the YNPS reports 1-4, Rist, et al.,1979a,b;1980a,b). An on-site observer at the site in case study 1 reported observations and interviews to the YNPS study in the form of protocols, and also provided supplementary site reports and documents. This case study selects key incidents

as an organizing focus and analyzes curricular choices in context (Erickson, 1977; and Malinowski, 1922). In this manner understanding grows about the evolution of the policy idea in project one: institutional collaboration on peer counseling for work experience students. This was also called a unique or exemplary feature of the project.

Project one formed a consortium between a city school board of education and a community college. The community college proposed to train students as peer counselors to counsel high school youth employed through the project, as well as to give career guidance workshops and job placements to community college students. The high schools would offer career guidance to students and place students in public and private sector jobs. The project was located in a large metropolitan area where the dropout rate from the high schools was 51% and the youth unemployment rate was 40%. Revised objectives of the proposal planned for participation of 400 high school students and 400 college students.

Discussion

Choice Domains for Curriculum Quality. From case study 1 it is clear that attention to motivation, sequencing and goals in program implementation does not proceed in a linear fashion. Indeed, administrative features external to the project but ralated to the context necessitated that staff time be often spent dealing with those entities alongside substantive curricular concerns. The bureaucratic and ideological context became increasingly influential in determining the eventual curricular design.

Motivation: Learner placement. Three obstacles to successful learner placement were noticible in the case study. First, bureaucratic norms necessitated tedious steps in contract approval, modifications, hiring and certification of job developers, certification of students and job sites, all of which influenced the ability of the project to attend to careful placements. The federal government, the schools, and the local city agencies all had high stakes in the project's success and thus wanted input into negotiations. Second, certification and reimbursement of public sector worksites failed because of the stagnating pace of a local department of employment. Third, the peer counselor linkage between the community college and the high schools proved to be increasingly logistically impractical and unlikely to happen as planned, because of travel time for the youth, schedules, and the late start-up. Youthwork placed the project on probation during the summer for misuse of peer counselor funds, and failure to have started the project. Another alternative at this point may have been to reveiw the substantive roles of the peer counselors and their procedural implications. Yet, this component was viewed as a unique feature of the project, vital to knowledge development goals in the broader view of the YEDPA legislation and Youthwork's interests. Also, the project was selected for "White House" attention, thereby adding prestige and power to the belief that it was doable, and reducing the will for alternative plans.

A positive feature of work in the public sector worksites was that the students did not experience "make-work" situations, rather staff welcomed subsidized help.

Learner followup. Student followup in the worksites did not materialize through the peer counselors, and only by chance through the board of education component. An alternative plan was never tendered, partly because the budget did not have flexibility and approval of modifications was an overwhelming process. On-site counseling occurred by staff who were caring and supportive of the youth.

Learner worksite change. Numbers of students placed was a success indicator to Washington and the city agencies. Therefore, changes were not a priority, nor was the project staff equipped to process them.

Sequencing. The peer counselors attended workshop training sessions which held the assumption that career information and guidance topics would help them in counseling high school students. When their role responsibilities changed to student processsing, they reviewed in-take forms in one session, but other workshop content remained unchanged. High school students worked at the sites after school hours, with no formal connections made between the job site experience and schooling. A survey inventory about interests and jobs occurred after placements, with no immediate project use.

In part, school schedules , the type of entry into the schools, and the logistics of the project prevented more extensive school-work connections such as opportunities for reflective thinking. Assumptions about the nature of the curriculum and teaching also prevented workshops from being more integrative. The problems of negotiating entry into the community college involved approval by student interest groups and the administration in the form of appointments,and credit, and space. Low morale, the expenditure of staff time and energy on such concerns, proposal inflexibility,

in addition to project probation prevented staff from creating alternative project directions.

Educational Goals. The project implicitely argued that economic productivity stood as the primary goal, since it did not seek to accomodate a more extensive education-work linkage. The fate of the goal of economic productivity becoming foremost is significant, especially when we consider that further learning, socialization, and personal development had been implicitely foremost in the project proposal. Yet the ideological value expressed in federal paperwork, such as employment and earning numbers, and the probation questions and pressures to employ the youth all might have influenced this shift in focus. The linkage between the two educational organizations and the worksites proved awkward, and tentative, not to mention ineffective. Eventually the board of education and the department of employment staffs felt justified in rationalizing that on-the-job training had occurred, and that was sufficient, rather than the planned career information and job exploration.

Curriculum in Experiential Learning Programs.

From this case study several comments about curricular choices in experiential learning programs come to the fore.

1. Work experience programs that are intended to be educational need to look at the possible links between schooling and the job. Staff should be encouraged to be creative about the kinds of linkages, and not necessarily bound to preliminary proposal plans, as the plans may not be possible to implement once the project is underway. Such potential for spontaneity

is necessary, as the particular proposal writers may be quite removed from the actual setting where the project takes place. In this case study, logistical arrangements became unwieldly, and common sense should have advocated generating an alternative strategy.

2. Work experience projects should take into account the ideology and bureaucratic norms of community groups and schools when gaining project entry. Groups within and outside the school have particular values and operating procedures that can affect successful implementation. The community groups in this case study were the student groups, the department of employment, the city board of estimate, and the administration within each school and the community college.

3. Provisions in proposals need to be explicit about staff roles regarding substantive curricular concerns in the educational program. This case study argues that a multilayered bureaucratic and ideological context involving the federal, local and school agencies can boondoggle and educational program. Yet it likewise argues that beneath the procedural choices are also substantive choices affecting program quality. The case study challenges the assumption of the "new federalism" that by releasing programs to local control, the administrative boondoggles will be eliminated. An active bureaucratic and ideological context at the school and community level will continue to blur procedural and substantive choices unless the later become priorities.

4. The workplace needs to be broad enough to include private and public sector placements to motivate all students.

5. Goals need to go beyond economic productivity, as that is a short term goal from an educational standpoint for youth. Emphasis should be placed on what is learned about work,about socialization, personal development and further learning. Goals should be listed,and reexamined as programs evolve, to see if priorities have shifted as the program evolves, and to get a concensus about such shifts.

6. A danger of leaving all choices to the procedural realme means that substantive choices about curriculum are implicitely made to the detriment of the program's educational quality.

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